

# ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

C. E. ANDERSON

JUNE 20, 1983

INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

INTERVIEWED BY RON COCKRELL

ORAL HISTORY #1983-3

This transcript corresponds to audiotapes DAV-AR #4057-4060

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



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C. E. Anderson and Jim Williams reviewed the draft of this transcript. Their corrections were incorporated into this final transcript by Perky Beisel in summer 2000. A grant from Eastern National Park and Monument Association funded the transcription and final editing of this interview.

## **RESTRICTION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

C. E. Anderson, a building contractor from Independence, Missouri, performed remodeling services at 219 N. Delaware Street a year after the Trumans returned from the White House in 1953. Anderson provides little information about his personal background but offers numerous stories about his renovation projects at the Truman home, including work in the study, the basement, and the attic. Of particular interest is Anderson's recollection of remodeling the Truman's attic to prepare it for the many artifacts they accumulated during the presidential years. During that project he noticed evidence suggesting that a fire had at one time occurred in the attic.

Persons mentioned: George Ultch, Robert Nichols, Bob Saunders, Thomas P. Richter, Calvin Morgan, Mary Jane Truman, Harry S Truman, Bess W. Truman, James W. Symington, Bill Randall, Tom Pendergast, Harvey Jones.

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH  
C. E. ANDERSON**

HSTR INTERVIEW #1983-3

MICHAEL SHAVER: This interview of C. E. Anderson, a building contractor from Independence, Missouri, was conducted by Ron Cockrell, historian of the Midwest Regional Office of the National Park Service in Omaha, Nebraska, for the Harry S Truman National Historic Site. This interview took place on June 20, 1983.

C. E. ANDERSON: This drawing and this agreement [see appendix, item 1] is where I furnished material and labor to build bookshelves as shown on the accompanying drawing, excluding only the electrical and heating work, for the total sum of \$505.56. And a peculiar thing, and I don't know if you'll want these asides or not, but to get the books on this kind of a span . . . See, oh, approximately thirty-two to thirty-four inches in here, and loading them with books—they wanted them made out of pine—I needed to have vertical grain pine. At that time, George Ultch Lumber Company was down where Diamond International is, and they imported a train carload of clear white pine, and we sorted out the material in a carload of pine to make these shelves. “I'll take this one . . .” As they were unloading it, why then, we just put a truck alongside for the selected boards, and Mr. Truman came down and thanked Mr. George Ultch and the crew for letting me have that opportunity. And that made more of a difference than you'd think, but these are vertical grain so that they'll carry the heavy load of books and records. Now they're painted, but then that's immaterial.

RON COCKRELL: Oh, so you didn't do the actual painting of the bookshelves then once they were up? You just did the carpentry work?

ANDERSON: No, I did the carpentry.

COCKRELL: I see.

ANDERSON: Nichols, I think, did the painting.

COCKRELL: Oh, really? Was that soon after that?

ANDERSON: Oh, yes. He was working in conjunction with us as we were going along. Robert Nichols is a painter who had done that for a number of years, the inside work. Mr. Saunders, Bob Saunders, did the outside work. And I think you have met him or . . .

COCKRELL: Not yet, but I will be.

ANDERSON: I think I was the guy that introduced him to the Trumans, but he became very good friends and he did the work and a lot of the maintenance work since '54, thirty years practically. Then this is the contract or the agreement, the second one. This was the 9th of February 1954, and this was in March of 1954 that we remodeled the attic. Before this library building was erected, why, there was a fantastic amount of loot all in that attic. It was just unreal, if you can imagine. If you have the confidence to tour this library building, the Persian rug hanging drapery we moved I'll say twenty times in remodeling this Truman home attic.

COCKRELL: So it was up there?

ANDERSON: And the silver from the U.S.S. *Missouri* was up there. It's a weight, not enough to bother, but at any rate, we had to move it out of our way many times. This was the agreement [see appendix item 3]: "to apply one-by-four furring strips, sixteen inch centers to ceiling and rafters, nailing them with five-sixteenths Arrowhead insulation board to the furring strips, both ceiling and rafters, and applying the same insulation board to cover the

stairway. Nailing down present floor and applying one-eighth Masonite Temprtile on the attic floor, and building in three separate closets with sliding doors, two to be along the North wall and one along the East wall. Building in stairs from lower level to upper floor level. Enclosing the South chimney, in cement asbestos. For all of these items complete for the total sum of \$2,976.20.” I think that when I was through, when I totaled it up, it was less than \$200 difference than if I had done it by time and material, but he insisted on a contract.

COCKRELL: I see. Now, when you did that work, I know now you can see evidence of the charred roof, had there been a fire up there?

ANDERSON: Yes, sir.

COCKRELL: Really?

ANDERSON: When, I do not know.

COCKRELL: Oh, really? He didn't say anything about it or . . . ?

ANDERSON: Yes, he said that it was one devil of job to clean up. But these artifacts that had been acquired through the years of his presidency, he was needing to have a place to store them that was somewhat dust-tight or more secure. And this insulation board then had a fire-retardant effect, and they were concerned about fire. And if there is any way that I can put any emphasis on it, then the fire and the electrical in that building is that issue number one. [chuckling] Okay?

COCKRELL: Yes.

ANDERSON: Down in the basement, I did some work there just recently to put those temporary bars on there that they can readily remove. And when I was doing this basement work in there, we took out one of the original light bulbs in that house. And I don't know where it is, but it was the old, clear, Edison, elongated droplet effect that . . .

COCKRELL: It still worked?

ANDERSON: It still worked, sixty or seventy years afterwards. [chuckling]

COCKRELL: They don't make them like that anymore.

ANDERSON: But you still have the knob tube work in there, and the electrician, well, I've made to Tom [Richter] a recommendation on the electrician, but the number of electricians that I would allow on that, they are rare to find workmen that are very competent that are also very reliable. You're putting on restrictions that are at most impossible. And then this was April. "I agree to furnish material and labor and install in the attic three louver windows, translucent glass, and fiber glass screens, for a total sum of \$262.84," to get more ventilation and such through there [see appendix item 4].

COCKRELL: What was there before you did this?

ANDERSON: Rotted windows. We had to take out sash that had deteriorated considerably.

COCKRELL: Were they just plain glass windows?

ANDERSON: As I recall. They were not ornamental. About the same time I did the First Baptist Church and we put leaded-glass windows in those dormers at the First Baptist Church there at Pleasant and Truman [Road], but I don't recall if there was any . . . It might have been beveled glass, but I don't think so.

COCKRELL: I see. Were they capable of being opened?

ANDERSON: Yes, sir, they were double-hung. See, they were just put up with two sashes, as I recall, and the frame of these louvers could be removed and you could see evidence of this parting stop. I haven't been up there in many years.

COCKRELL: So, when you did this work in the attic, did Mr. Truman give you any

indication or impression at all if the fire had been recent or if this had gone back to maybe when the Gates lived there?

ANDERSON: The fire problem hadn't been all cleaned up when we got there. Though it was very old, it wasn't like a month after the fire. I don't think the fire occurred while he was the president. I believe it would have been back when he was in the senate or before. But I can make a telephone call and we can find out.

COCKRELL: I'd really appreciate it. That would help.

ANDERSON: Okay, there is a fire chief here that I'm acquainted with, and I am confident that they can tell when it was.

COCKRELL: They have it in their files, okay.

ANDERSON: Calvin Morgan lives on King's Highway. [tape is turned off]

ANDERSON: I don't know how to say this, but I'm finding that as I am conversing with people that are eventually going to have to make a determination, I want to give you what foundation that I can, so the credibility of witnesses and things of this sort all have to be weighed. Cal Morgan is a new chief in the fire department. He hasn't always been a chief. He was a fireman when I . . . I'm a rifleman, and I have taught a lot of people through the conservation department hunter safety and competition shooting, and he and I have hunted together and our sons are about the same age. We scouted and camped together and whatever, but I was in the carpenters and have helped him on the remodeling of his home. He was the president of the firefighters union when there was considerable problems in Independence.

The historical significance of the Pendergast-Truman relationship had not ought to go unnoticed in your book or in your determination. To know what really happened at this late date, there is no way, see, but the

carryover of the Pendergast machine is still here. Note the skimming trial, okay? But this man bucked the Pendergast-Sermon machine to the point that his wife called my then-wife, and they were getting the “North End” boys into the act of threatening, and their children were in grade school and about three or four blocks from home. A man that called at one o'clock in the afternoon and said, “Are you sure your baby daughter is going to come home? And she's wearing . . .” this, this, this, and this. Okay? Now, the party gets rough about that. Well, the reason that I'm in on this is that my tour of duty in the Navy took me to China, and I don't know if you've been to 'Nam [Vietnam] or where, but if you've been to the Orient, then you know what the smell of a decaying body smells like. And as a person starves they start to decay while they're still alive, and you can remember that smell all the days of your life, and I have smelled that out here in Independence. I adopted a three-year-old boy that had been starved, and yet, of the families that were supposed to be caring for him, some thirteen were identified by the juvenile court in the year that we had him, you know, to establish abandonment. Why, some of them tried to kidnap him from my place. And because of that, I had a pretty fair association with the police, and they were patrolling my street every thirty minutes, day and night. We'd pull the blind down, or a signal of some kind, to stop and investigate in the event that someone had gained entry. And me being a rifleman and a shooting enthusiast, why, I'd pull the plug from a shotgun, and we loaded it for bear. So we played a rough game. So my wife said, “Bring your child from school and come to our place. Andy's ready.” So we've had that kind of association for quite a few years, okay? So this man will not lie to you. Whether or not they have the records is really the question.

COCKRELL: I hope they do. That would really help.

ANDERSON: That would help you. Okay, well, that's as far as I can go. The man's name is Cal Morgan. I don't believe that there was some work . . . This is an attic job estimate that I have here. At the same time I was doing that attic job, I was also doing other work up there that was piddling work, to look at it now, but it was important to the overall project. This outfit is still in business over Troost. I've just recently gotten some additional work. That was the layout of the attic.

[End #4057; Begin #4058]

SHAVER: This is the second reel of an interview with C. E. Anderson, a building contractor of Independence, Missouri. It was conducted by Ron Cockrell, historian of the Midwest Regional Office of the National Park Service in Omaha, Nebraska, for the Harry S Truman National Historic Site. This interview took place on June 20, 1983.

COCKRELL: You really have the only floor plans for a lot of the house. There's supposed to be a park service team coming down this week to measure the house and do floor plans. But so far we haven't been working here too much.

ANDERSON: Well, I have considered it a pleasure to have worked at it. I'm still maybe just an old man wanting to have a dream, but my dreams still haven't come true. That's the driveway . . . This is Mary Jane Truman's out in Grandview that doesn't relate to this house.

COCKRELL: What happened on that driveway? Who did they get to come and do the work?

ANDERSON: There was a new man in town, a new contractor in town, I even forget his name now [Larkin?] that offered to do it for about a third of what, the way I was doing it, and I still contend that it was a disservice to them, in that

when you cut off eighteen inches of ground, regrade it, through an old drive, that was a carriage drive, then you're cutting through the base rock and the whole bit. My estimate will show that I talked to the regular paving contractor and we were going to take out all of the base rock, re-lay base rock, and then do a highway job, really, so that it would divert the water to keep from going over onto the Wallaces, but it would turn it down into Truman Road, and there would be a swale or a hump. By diversion, a swale down the driveway, it would turn the water. Well, they wound up with grading it down and putting a two-inch asphalt on it, and they've redone it a number of times since then, you see. Well, the city and the county . . . I hope I don't bore you.

COCKRELL: Oh, no.

ANDERSON: But I'm trying to tell you something, that I believe that a craftsman, to do something that he's not ashamed of, needs to do the foundation work before he builds the building. I'm still fighting within my union that we as a trade need to train men to do monumental work, if the monumental work is going to be done. Because the non-union or the right-to-work, the happy-go-lucky, the farmer that comes in and is very willing to work, had ought to be not able to do some of the work that the skilled craftsman is able to do. And I contend that the trade school, the professional, ought to challenge to excellence so that we have the craftsmen that they can send from Kansas City to Paris. Rather than have to go to Paris, they come to Kansas City, see? So, to do the foundation work for the driveway, the cost before I'd even get to the topping, was going to be considerably more than what this was. So . . .

COCKRELL: And he was willing to settle for the lower bid?

ANDERSON: He took the lower bid because of the price.

COCKRELL: I see. Well, that's strange because he was known for being a road builder and doing a very good job on county roads. Yet, on his own driveway he would settle for substandard.

ANDERSON: Well, have you been caught in a trap of someone telling you something that wasn't so?

COCKRELL: Yes. [chuckling]

ANDERSON: Okay. How to distinguish between truth and fiction? In other words, for you to know that I'm telling you the truth, you're appraising my credibility right now, you see? I'm not holding it against Harry or Bess Truman in any sense of the word. I'm saying that the man was a very good salesman, and he sold them something that was not what I think they ought to do. And at that time I was younger and more ignorant, and I couldn't have afforded to do it the way that I thought it ought to be, and at the price that would meet the other man. There was no way of giving him something for nothing.

Well, this was a matter of purchasing and installation of storm doors and windows on the house, and handrails for the attic in the house [see appendix item 5]. This was October 22, 1954. So, really, all I have is about a year's work at various times throughout the year to show that . . . That's job 6 ½, new screens in preparation for painters [see appendix item 6].

COCKRELL: New screens? Was that throughout the house or in the attic?

ANDERSON: I don't know how many of them I had. I made some of the screens look like with—material. Six feet of 42.

COCKRELL: So [unintelligible] maintenance.

ANDERSON: Maintenance and cleaning [see appendix item 7]. There's your 11 feet of 24-inch 12, 48 feet of 28, 11 feet of 30, and 33 feet of 36, and 66 feet of

42, so we did a bit of re-screening. But that's twenty-seven years ago. If I forget things a week ago, how in the world do you expect me . . . [chuckling] But you see what I'm getting at here. So will this help you?

COCKRELL: Oh, definitely. Yes, we'll keep that for our records.

ANDERSON: [unintelligible].

COCKRELL: [unintelligible] the best basement. Is that one for the kitchen?

ANDERSON: Extra working materials as described here [see appendix item 8]: plastic tile, plaster in stairway to basement, sand for patio plumbing trench. We had a plumbing drain that went underneath that back patio.

COCKRELL: So you had to dig a trench?

ANDERSON: Yes, and then build sand back in on top of it and re-lay the brick. And formica and plywood, the counter top, plywood, also floor. I don't know where all this was. Of course, I want to look.

But there is a story that I want you to get across somewhere in your history. But in the front room [music room], this fireplace, before we put this steel beam in, the floor had sagged because of this dad-gum piano out here. And it wound up anyhow that as I was lifting this back up, why, we noticed that some tiles were loose on this fireplace. And there was one particular tile, and there's a story in this trail that follows this tile around this fireplace. And it's raised, glazed tile, that one tile fits to another one. It shows a little boy going fishing down a trail in the woods, as I recall. Well, one of them—it was a key tile—was broken, and the House of Tile here in Kansas City—a man named Slater was the owner of it—and this was 1954, shortly after the war, but tile hadn't been . . . should we say re-established with Spain and Mexico. He had been dealing with them, but there wasn't any special work from Italy or anything of this sort. Well, he contacted something like six different countries, suppliers in six different

countries, to see if he could have one tile that was broken replaced. And finally, there was one Italian tile-setter that he sent out, and, “Ah! Give me some room!” So we just cleaned out an area, and I saw the man put into a clamp where all four pieces are different. I mean, there were three pieces of the tile that were still there. And he held it in a clamp and then touched up where the cracks were and re-glazed it with a torch.

COCKRELL: Right there on the spot?

ANDERSON: Right on the spot. The man was an artist if I ever saw one work.

COCKRELL: They had him flown in from Italy?

ANDERSON: No, he was an Italian that worked for a company.

COCKRELL: He was from Italy, I see.

ANDERSON: But he really knew his trade. Now, to see those kind of men, to give them an opportunity, that is a rare thing. [telephone rings and interview is interrupted] Well, anyway, I was thinking of this plastic tile and that reminded me of another story. I thought I'd just pass it on, for what it was worth.

COCKRELL: Did you find out anything about that fireplace, the tiles that were on there? Was that original at the Gates?

ANDERSON: I didn't know. I would say it was original with the Gates.

COCKRELL: It looks kind of like it would have been. It looks like you did quite a few jobs for the Trumans.

ANDERSON: Yes, I did. See, this is up in 1956.

COCKRELL: How did Mr. Truman know to get a hold of your services?

ANDERSON: I don't know how far to tell you, because some of this might embarrass someone. But use discretion, okay?

COCKRELL: Okay.

ANDERSON: When you're asked to do something that's extremely difficult to do, and

then a salesman from a mill company sees you do it, then later on when they're playing bridge or something and someone asks for a difficult thing, why, "All right, I'll recommend this . . . I just saw a man do something . . ."

[End #4058; Begin #4059]

SHAVER: This is the third reel of an interview with C. E. Anderson, a building contractor from Independence, Missouri. The interview was conducted by Ron Cockrell, historian from the Midwest Regional Office of the National Park Service in Omaha, Nebraska, for the Harry S Truman National Historic Site. This interview was conducted on June 20, 1983.

ANDERSON: I feel like bragging a bit, in a sense, but it's not bragging. I'm wanting to explain what happened. I'm a member of the Reorganized Latter Day Saints church, and an uncle of mine lived up here at . . . well, you can't see it from here, but at Nickell and McCoy, probably the man that kept me sane when I was in the service in how to be aboard a ship when you'll have fifteen or twenty go insane of the people that are under stress and your unit gets a unit citation because . . . we filled in the gaps and such. That man's stability helped not only myself but other people that were under stress that I in turn could help out.

Okay, this man, when I came back from the service, went to school, got my degree and taught school in Alaska, and my wife grew ill, and it turns out that she got jaundice up there. We realized that it was a diet problem, and that we needed to come back. Well, where are you going to work? I worked in Texas and all over the country, so I was a journeyman and an industrial arts/math teacher, so I could go anywhere. But that man, I visited him, and he said, "Why don't you help me here?" And they were building on down . . . I think it's between here and 24 Highway and over a block or two, at Slover Park Church. The trim work

from American Sash and Door around the baptistery was a frame coming this way and into split tile. Well, he was running the volunteer work, and they needed to have someone that could put that big picture frame together. Now, notice the peculiar work here, that this is wider, thicker than it is back here. All right, to accent this door, if you were really wanting to accent it, and you put twelve-inch-wide trim on it and bring this out some four inches and slope it back, you would have that same picture frame effect. Then, when you come down at this point where you'd be able to see the water, and then below that you'd have your split tile to fit this picture frame into, and a man gave you only one piece said, "Can you make that picture frame fit that tile?" When you have a rough surface, I worked a half a day on each of those two pieces of wood a foot long.

The supplier of the \$300 or \$400 frame at that time was Hancock. The salesman came in to watch me. I didn't care if he was watching me or not. But he was the guy that recommended me to Truman. And ever so many places, American Sash and Door would send me out to do something that someone had botched up or whatever.

COCKRELL: Oh, I see. [chuckling]

ANDERSON: So, from a very difficult . . . But I stopped to see a guy today to see if I could get in . . . In what, 1951 or 1952? So I'd kind of like to see how the thing looks, and I haven't looked at it in thirty years, see?

COCKRELL: Oh, really? Yes, since the fifties.

ANDERSON: But this was a recommendation from two pieces of wood that were very difficult to fit. And then, when this came up, "Why don't you go see him?" And they made it over a bridge game, see? So this is the story of how I did this.

COCKRELL: You had an excellent recommendation then.

ANDERSON: Well, from a friend. What I'm trying to tell you, or show you, is that I've been there, and now I'd kind of like to see how the thing stood up. I've been in the basement, so I know blame well that the footings that I put in there, they didn't move.

COCKRELL: Probably not. [chuckling]

ANDERSON: What I'm concerned about, I haven't been in above to see if there has been settlement. There might have been, because when I was putting those temporary bars on the windows, why, a four- or five-inch downspout was running water across the floor of the basement, and this ought not to be.

COCKRELL: That's strange.

ANDERSON: So we reconnected . . . I think Tom's got a record showing that I straightened out the downspout. He helped me a little bit to straighten out the metal so we could reconnect it.

COCKRELL: It was running right into the basement?

ANDERSON: Yes.

COCKRELL: Intentionally then?

ANDERSON: No, it had been . . . a dog or something had gotten underneath the porch and had disconnected it, so that the downspout, instead of going out onto the splash box, why, it was disconnected and was running in one of the windows and you had problems.

Now, how to reach you individually is very difficult, but it can be done, okay? I'm not in any position, nor am I wanting to in any way, to give any kind of a threat or anything of this sort, but I have a friend that lives down in Holden, and he had a son that volunteered to get into the Navy. Well, the guy was a little erratic, and he had a twitch or something of this sort. I've seen it happen, you call it cannibalism in a chicken group, but to get someone that has some nervous twitch or some irregularity or

something, and then a gang of boys or young men that are not controlled or not disciplined, they'll start picking on the guy. And he took a dishonorable discharge rather than to go back to his unit at Norfolk, Virginia. Okay? Now, at the time, Symington was senator, Bill Randall was a representative, and I knew both of them personally, being a delegate to a number of conventions where they were speaking, and we'd been in their offices, we had talked as committeemen from our carpenters to find out labor-interested items. Yet, neither of those congressmen could persuade this young ex-sailor to level with them, see? But in some way, do such a good job that there would be . . . if Jesus was watching you as an inspector writing the history, do your level best, so that your superiors can get the information that they need to determine at what point to make that house come back to life. Because Truman gave a considerable impetus to this whole area.

COCKRELL: He certainly did.

ANDERSON: Well, I'm of the opinion that Pendergast didn't sway Truman as much as some people would lead you to believe. Now, verify that as a historian if you can. I don't believe you can, but you might be able to.

COCKRELL: It will be very difficult to do. There's a lot of different opinions on that.

ANDERSON: So how to find the truth at this late a date, but please verify what you have. That's the reason I'm around to show you, and I believe that I can document what I have been saying, okay?

COCKRELL: So are you going to leave this material with Tom and I?

ANDERSON: Now, that's a good question. Of course, now I have to make a determination.

COCKRELL: But it will be kept in its top form also. What we would need to do is duplicate the more important documents.

ANDERSON: Let me get better acquainted with you before I answer that.

COCKRELL: Okay.

ANDERSON: And I'm not trying to be evasive. I want to know you better. Fair enough?

COCKRELL: Okay.

ANDERSON: These, yes, you've got them.

COCKRELL: Oh, okay.

ANDERSON: That's no problem. We can go over here to Harvey Jones and make a print of this if you want, and that might help.

COCKRELL: Okay. So Tom doesn't have a copy of that?

ANDERSON: He does not.

COCKRELL: Okay.

ANDERSON: You're unfortunately caught in this credibility trap. I don't know how far I can trust you, okay?

COCKRELL: What about Tom? [chuckling]

ANDERSON: Well, I mean I don't know you guys.

COCKRELL: I see.

ANDERSON: See what I'm saying? I wouldn't want to . . . All right, let's say that these would be tossed aside, and I'd come back after them. I'd have no recourse as to what could I do. All right, then, at some years later, well, I worked . . . I've seen this happen: craftsmen that said that they had worked for Kings Ranch or Phillips Ranch or whatever, and they had no documentation or they had no way of proving it, and they were a derelict on the street. I taught school in Alaska, and I saw a man that was a millionaire come up there to try to show those old-timers how to build. And in one year's time he died in three-inch runoff of water because he didn't have a friend who would roll him over and he drowned in the gutter of a street, see? He had alienated every friend that he had, and there wasn't

a soul there that would turn him over, and he was so drunk that he couldn't roll over. So I'm saying that I believing the Scripture when it says, "When you think you stand, take heed lest you fall." So I want to make this available to you, believe me I do, or I wouldn't be showing you. But I might also, if you think that there would be a possibility of losing them, then I'd rather that you'd . . . Let's make the copies, and then you can work from the copies.

COCKRELL: I think probably the better thing to do would be to check with Tom and see. I think he would like to see what you have here, the drawings and the lists of material, and then see if he would like to negotiate with you to have you loan them to us, or if he thinks we can get by just making copies.

ANDERSON: Well, as you wish. I'm not wanting to play dog in the manger. This isn't the idea, and I don't know of anyone else that I can trust. But you are an arm of the United States Government, and I'm a veteran. I've had a commendation, and yet you're looking at a guy that has had to have been . . . I have been put into this particular position, to where a federal officer and I . . . I wondered whether or not I would have to kill him to keep him out of my house. Well, when a treasury agent starts coming into my house against my will, that's bad news, okay? But inside my house you're fair game, unless I get mad at you.

COCKRELL: That's the way it should be. [chuckling]

ANDERSON: And I made a believer out of the guy, but his credentials were old. From his badge or his ID, I couldn't identify the man, see? And you take your beard off, and you have a picture in your beard, and you're a whale of a different looking guy, see? The same deal with a picture with no beard and in a beard, and then it's difficult, see? And nope . . .

COCKRELL: I don't blame you.

ANDERSON: So I'm of this opinion. I'm not saying that I'm talking about trust, when I'm also talking about the reason that I have to distrust, see?

COCKRELL: I have a vested interest in the Truman project because, first of all, I was born and raised in Independence, and I've lived here . . . well, twenty-two years. I live in Omaha now, where the regional office of the park service is, and all my relatives live here in Independence, and I have a special feeling for the Trumans. I think he's probably one of the greatest presidents we've ever had, and I personally would like to have this be one of the showcases of the national park system, because it could be a gem.

ANDERSON: It could be.

COCKRELL: I think it will be.

ANDERSON: Do you have a card perchance?

COCKRELL: An identification? Yes.

ANDERSON: Well, I'm just thinking of a personal card or something of this sort.

COCKRELL: Well, I don't have a business card. I just have my park service ID.

ANDERSON: Well, I was thinking of getting your name down so that I can ask for Ron . . .

COCKRELL: Okay.

ANDERSON: I find this to be a way of keeping things somewhat in order.

COCKRELL: Well, that's a good idea.

ANDERSON: Writing down when I'm talking to somebody. You would be the park historian?

COCKRELL: Well, I am actually in the regional office. I'm on here for just another month to do research, and coming back and forth between Independence and Omaha.

[End #4059; Begin #4060]

SHAVER: This is reel number four of an interview with C. E. Anderson, a building

contractor of Independence, Missouri. This interview is conducted by Ron Cockrell, a historian with the Midwest Regional Office of the National Park Service in Omaha, Nebraska, for the Harry S Truman National Historic Site. This interview was conducted on June 20, 1983.

COCKRELL: I have been assigned to the Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

ANDERSON: [chuckling] Well, you see what I'm trying to say. One of the things, I hope that I don't antagonize, I don't want to. But on the other hand, I'm a craftsman, I'm a teacher, and I refuse to be intimidated. I would like to have . . . really, as a craftsman, the only thing that I have to sell is my skill and credibility. As a schoolteacher, I've put myself into some hellish situations in trying to develop a . . . well, it's a pre-vocational effort out at the juvenile detention home.

COCKRELL: That's a job.

ANDERSON: I've been flat on my back with a sixteen-year-old on top of me, but this was my own doing. I challenged a guy, and he took me. But we help turn these teenagers around, too. Well, how do you get people to consider the possibility of changing their lifestyle if you don't give them alternatives? So I was asking him to go from a streetwise thief to a beginning craftsman, and you decide whether or not the more you steal, why, the less you get for it, or the more you nail, why, the more they'll pay you for it. Well, this is the life, this is the choice that you're making. I think I can still have something to do with this. One of my vested interests in this, and I would appreciate whatever help that you could give me, in that I want, if possible . . . and I'm sixty-three years old, but I would like very much to use working on this project as a means of challenging the young men in the trade to do work beyond their capability. And if I can do that, and I might be one of the few individuals that will even try to do that, then we can

make this a showplace of the park service, and we'll make Williamsburg, Virginia, look like a . . . Yes, I mean money was spent there like crazy, see? And I'd love to see it, but I'm saying that you have craft capability in this area of doing whatever you want to have done, but through the park service, you let us know. Get us into the language to where we can understand what you want done, and it'll be done.

COCKRELL: Well, that's what our purpose is here. Probably by the end of the summer my report will be done, and then the recommendations will be made. This week, there's a team of architects coming down—later this afternoon, in fact—to draw up all the specifications and the drawings for that job's bill. Was that \$75,000 or so? So, once all . . .

[End #4060]

END OF INTERVIEW

## **APPENDIX**

1. Contract for adding shelves to the Truman home study, 9 February 1954.
2. Contract for remodeling the attic, 1 March 1954.
3. Contract to install three windows in the attic, 5 April 1954.
4. Contract to purchase and install storm doors and windows and attic handrails, 22 October 1954.
5. Contract to make new screens and prepare for the painters, 6 May 1955.
6. Invoice for purchase of supplies to construct new screens, 21 April 1955.
7. Contract for floor supports, foundation, and basement repair work, 24 November 1954.

For copies of other plans, bills, receipts, and records provided by Anderson, see the park's historical file:

Historic Structures File: HS-1

Historic Maintenance: C.E. Anderson

CULTURAL RESOURCES HISTORICAL FILE